2007 in 3,445 villages in Maharashtra service area with population of more than 2,000 and not having a PCO.

* Provision of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) 'on demand' in 228 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) in the first quarter of the year 2006.

(b) As on 31.10.2005, 6,504 villages have been provided with telephone facility on Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) in the State of Maharashtra.

(c) As on 31.10.2005, out of 6,441 unconnected villages, 1918 villages have been provided VPTs and 4,523 villages remain unconnected.

(d) As per the terms and conditions of the Agreement signed between USOF and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), the 4,523 remaining unconnected villages are targeted to be provided with VPT facility progressively by November, 2007.

National Highways in Uttar Pradesh

*333. PROF. M.M.AGARWAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any new road policy for development, expansion and maintenance of the various roads including National Highways in the country particularly in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government to implement the above policy?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD & TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) This Ministry is essentially responsible for a development and maintenance of National Highways. The Committee on Infrastructure set up by the Government, has considered a presentation made by the Planning Commission involving programmes with an investment of Rs. 1,72,000 crore for upgradation of National Highways in next seven years (2005-2012) under National Highways Development Project (NHDP).

The Programme envisages completion of remaining length of NHDP phases I and II consisting of the Golden Quadrilateral, East-West and North-South Corridors, port connectivity and other projects, 4/6 laning of

10,000 km. of National Highways under NHDP Phase-Ill, accelerated road development in North-East Region under Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North Eastern Region (SARDP-NE), upgradation of about 20,000 km. of single/intermediate lane National Highways to two lanes with paved shoulders under NHDP Phase-IV, six laning of around 5,000 km. (proposed to increase to 6,500 km.) through NHDP Phase-V, identification and construction of around 1,000 km. of Expressways under NHDP Phase-VI and construction of Bypasses, Flyovers, Road Over Bridges etc. under NHDP Phase-VII. The Government have already approved implementation of four laning of 4,000 km. of National Highways on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis under NHDP Phase-IIIA and preparation of the detailed projects reports for the 6,000 km. under NHDP Phase IIIB. Nearly 1756 km. stretches of Uttar Pradesh are covered under NHDP Phase-I and II, 266 km. under NHDP Phase-IIIA and 351 km. under NHDP Phase-IIIB. The Government has recently approved implementation of Phase-A of SARDP-NE connecting 1,110 km. of National Highways and 200 kim. of State roads and roads of strategic importance and also given approval for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for roads in Phase-B consisting of improvements of 2,141 km. of National Highways and 2,981 km. of State roads and road of strategic importance.

As a matter of new policy, implementation of the various phases of National Highways Development Project, in future, will be mainly through Public Private Partnership.

Availability of Sim Cards in Jharkhand

†*334. SHRI AJAY MAROO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications pending for excel pre-paid Sim Card of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited in Jharkhand;

(b) by when the Sim Cards are likely to be made available to them; and

(c) by when the system of making excel pre-paid Sim Card available on demand would be brought in place?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.